

COMPARISON OF TWO TIBETAN COMPENDIUMS ON BUDDHIST COSMOLOGY DATING FROM THE 13TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

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This paper examines two Tibetan sources to show how Tibetan masters could introduce people of totally different cultural background into Buddhist doctrines. The *Explanation of the Knowable* (Tib. *Shes-bya rab-tu gsal-ba*) was written by 'Phags-pa lama, while the *Answers to the Questions of Sken-dha from Europe* (Tib. *Rgya-gar rum-yul-pa Sken-dhas dris-lan*) is the compendium of Kun-dga' Chos-legs. Both analyse the same subject: cosmology as part of the basic doctrines, and both have the same aim: initiating foreigners into Buddhist precepts. Thus we can observe the similarity of the two works and the teaching methods used by the masters who followed different traditions at different times.

Key words: 'Phags-pa lama, Kun-dga' Chos-legs, Buddhist cosmology, cosmogony and antropogony of the abhidharma-system.

1. Prologue

When Buddhism was disseminated from India to Tibet, missionaries compiled special course books for their new disciples in order to span the cultural discrepancies.

Similar works were written later by Tibetan masters, too, when they themselves became transmitters in the second half of the 13th century. With the help of these works Mongols were systematically acquainted with the basic teachings of Buddhism.¹

At that time the Mongols conquered China, established the Yuan dynasty (1280–1368) and held the reins of power over the Tibetan dukedoms. In 1244 the

¹ Buddhism was not unknown to Mongolians as during their campaigns in the first decades of the 13th century they contacted Tanguts and Jurchen who were familiar with Buddhism. The way opened to Buddhist ideas as well as Buddhist works, cult objects, monks and scholars who visited them. Later, when the Western trade routes were already controlled by Mongolians, they learned about the prosperous Uighur Buddhist culture in the city-states of Turkestan.

second son of Ögödei khan (1186–1241), Göden (1206–1251), summoned the chief of the Sa-skyapa dukedom, Sa-skyapa paṇḍita (1182–1251) to present a report.² He set out with his two nephews, 'Phags-pa lama (1235–1280) and Phyag-na Rdo-rje (1239–1267), and they met Göden near Lake Kukunor. It seems that Sa-skyapa paṇḍita made deep impression with his sense of diplomacy and great wisdom on the theoretically tolerant Mongolians, mainly the royal court. The task of proselytisation and peace maintenance fell on 'Phags-pa lama after the death of his uncle in 1251. Shortly after the death of Sa-skyapa paṇḍita Göden also died, and Qubilai khan (1215–1294) inherited and ascended the throne.

'Phags-pa lama and Qubilai khan agreed on a new alliance – the so-called *two laws*³ – sharing ecclesiastical and secular powers. 'Phags-pa became the preceptor of the emperor and the empire. He taught the princes Buddhist intellectuality, spirituality, and in turn received the title of Viceroy of Tibet⁴ and became responsible for the governance of Tibet. 'Phags-pa lama, the excellent teacher and polymath of his time, and also an expert of a significant number of different subject areas, wrote many religious and philosophical treatises for the members of the Mongolian ruling family.

The most important piece of his extensive life-work is the *Explanation of the Knowable*. It was written in 1278 for Jingim (1243–1286),⁵ the third son of Qubilai khan, in order to give a clear and brief introduction to the substance of Buddhism.

In 1273 Jingim was appointed crown-prince and head of the Central Secretariat by his father. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Confucianism, that is why the Southern Chinese officials wanted to put him in power in 1285, after the resignation of Qubilai khan. The plan failed because of the sudden death of the prince one year later.⁶ It was not recorded how deeply Jingim wanted to study Buddhism, but 'Phags-pa lama's *Explanation of the Knowable* could be a good basis for him.

Several centuries later Tibetans used similar methods to acquaint Western people with their doctrines, Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784–1842) being one of the first. His teacher, Sangs-rgyas Phun-tshogs and two other lamas, Kun-dga' Chos-legs and Tshul-khrims Rgya-mtsho⁷ wrote for him short summaries of the major areas of Buddhism.⁸ In these books the lamas gave detailed answers to the questions raised

² Göden chose the Sa-skyapa sect out of the numerous Tibetan sects because they had more than a century of history and both the ecclesiastical and the secular power (Tib. *gdung-rgyud* and *chos-rgyud*, respectively) was represented by two branches of the Sa-skyapa family.

³ In Mongolian *qoyar yosun* 'two laws', while Tibetan uses three phrases: *gnyis lugs* 'two modes', *khrims gnyis* 'two laws', and *gtsug gnyis-lag* 'two-fold-protective'.

⁴ Mongolian tradition regards the relationship between the leaders of the Sa-skyapa sect and the Mongolian khans as the first conversion of the Mongols.

⁵ His name means 'True Gold' which was given to him by a Northern Chinese Buddhist monk. Name variations: Jing-gyim, Jim-gyim, Činggim, Chen-chin, Zhen-jin, Ching-kim.

⁶ After his death Jingim's son, Temür was nominated as the crown-prince by Qubilai khan and later he became the emperor Chen-zong.

⁷ We know very little about Csoma's lamas. The only reliable source about them is Csoma's letter to captain C. P. Kennedy, dated 5th March 1825 (Duka 1885, pp. 41–66).

⁸ The summaries were completed during Csoma's stay in Bzang-la around 1823–1824.

by Csoma on various topics: philosophy, religion, chronology, linguistics, literature, medicine, etc.⁹ These summaries were named later as ‘Alexander-Books’ by A. H. Francke.¹⁰ He thought that the questions of Csoma were similar to those of Menandros, the King of Bactria who reigned in the 2nd century BC. The famous *Questions of King Milinda*¹¹ (Pāli: *Milinda Pañha*) recorded the conversation of Nāgasena, a Buddhist teacher with the Indo-Greek king who – coming from a different culture – put questions quite odd in the Indian context (Francke 1926, p. 322).

Kun-dga’ Chos-legs, the abbot of the Rdzong-khul monastery,¹² in his *Answers to the Questions of Sken-dha* (= Skander, that is, Alexander) *from Europe* answered Csoma’s questions in six chapters. This compendium, as part of his collected works, has still been preserved in the Rdzong-khul monastery.

2. Cosmological Compendiums

The *Explanation of the Knowable* consists of five chapters, three of them discuss the history of Buddhism and its principal tenets, while the other two cover the basics of the Buddhist cosmology in 35 folios. The six chapters of the *Answers to the Questions of Sken-dha from Europe* include four theoretical and two historical parts. The discussion of cosmology in 40 pages is an introductory summary of the historical chapters about the arrangement of the various worlds within the universe and how those worlds came into existence.

Buddhist cosmology, in the form presented in both manuscripts, was summarised in the so-called Abhidharma literature on the basis of the sūtras and of the sacred writings on monastic discipline (Skt. *vinaya sūtra*) revealed by the Buddha. Out of the three main cosmological systems¹³ this one is the simplest and the most comprehensible. This fact explains the similar construction of the two compendiums, but does not explain the almost literal identity of their contents.

2.1. ’Phags-pa lama: *Explanation of the Knowable*

The colophon gives the complete title of ’Phags-pa lama’s work: *A Treatise for Bodhi-sattva Prince Jingim Entitled: “Explanation of the Knowable”*.¹⁴ This work contains

⁹ The only publication by Csoma concerning the topics of the Alexander-Books was the “Analysis of a Tibetan Medical Work”. *JASB* Vol. IV (1835), pp. 1–20.

¹⁰ August Hermann Francke (1870–1930) was a German Tibetologist and one of the greatest missionary-scholars of the Moravian church. He worked in the Himalaya region, mainly in Jammu and Kashmir from 1896 until 1909.

¹¹ Milinda is the Indian version of Menandros.

¹² This ’Brug-pa bka’-brgyud-pa monastery was an important educational and cultural centre in the 18th–19th centuries.

¹³ According to the Tibetan tradition the Buddha taught three levels of cosmology: the numerically definite cosmology based on the Abhidharma teachings, the special cosmological system of the Kālacakra Tantra and the non-cosmological system of the Rdzogs-chen.

¹⁴ Tib. *Shes-bya rab-tu gsal-ba zhes bya-ba’i bstan-bcos-bskul* | *rgyal-bu byang-chub sems-dpa’ Jim-gyim*. Included in the *Sa-Skya bka’-’bum*, vol. pa, ff. 1r–35v (vol. XIII). For a reprint of the

five chapters: (1) The worldly environment (Tib. *Snod-kyi 'jig-rten*) (ff. 2v–8v), (2) The world of living beings (Tib. *Bcud-kyi 'jig-rten*) (ff. 9r–26v), (3) The path (Tib. *Lam*) (ff. 26v–28r), (4) The result (Tib. *'Bras-bu*) (ff. 28r–34r), (5) The unconditioned (Tib. *'Dus ma byas*) (ff. 34r–34v), and the Colophon (ff. 34v–35r).

The work is mainly a compilation, its only original part is about history in the second chapter. Compilation does not mean that it cannot be considered an independent work. Such a clear overview of the huge and vast literature of the topic that accumulated in the course of the centuries is an important work.

'Phags-pa lama's treatise became so popular in Tibet that it served as a source for several later writers. Among others Bsod-nams Rgyal-mtshan incorporated certain passages into *The Clear Mirror: A Royal Genealogy* (Tib. *Rgyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*) (1328), and Tshal-pa Kun-dga'-rdo-rje into the *Red Annals* (Tib. *Deb-ther dmar-po*) (1346). Later even a Chinese translation was made which became a part of the *Chinese Canon*.¹⁵

The first European Tibetologist to deal with the Tibetan original along with the Mongolian translation was János Szerb in his unpublished MA thesis (1978)¹⁶ and doctoral dissertation (1981).¹⁷ He also composed a sketchy presentation of the *Explanation of the Knowable* and made some valuable comments on the first chapter of the Tibetan text in an unpublished manuscript (1977).¹⁸ The Tibetan text was translated into English by Constance Hoog (1983). Later Vladimir Uspensky (2006) published the Romanised transcription of the Mongolian text with notes.

2.2. Kun-dga' Chos-legs: Answers to the Questions of Sken-dha from Europe

It was the voluminous book of the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*¹⁹ ('Tibetan Alphabet') that served for Csoma as the first source of information about Tibetan culture. Despite the biased way of conception of both the author and his informants, the versatile contents of the book gave Csoma an idea of a unique civilisation totally unknown in the West.

entire collection see: Bsod-nams Rgya-mtsho (ed.): *The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa skya sect*. Tokyo, Toyo Bunko, 1966.

¹⁵ Chinese title: *Zhang suo zhi lun*, Taisho edition, No. 1645.

¹⁶ Szerb, János (1978): Fejezetek a tibeti–mongol kapcsolatok történetéből: 'Phags-pa láma munkássága (különös tekintettel a mongol vonatkozású műveire) [Chapters from the history of Tibeto–Mongolian relations: 'Phags-pa lama's life-work (particularly his Mongolian-related works)] (MA thesis, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest).

¹⁷ Szerb, János (1981): Clossen on the Oeuvre of Bla-ma 'Phags-pa I–II (PhD thesis, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest).

¹⁸ Szerb, János (1977): Egy enciklopédikus mű a XIII. századból [An encyclopaedic work from the 13th century]. (Manuscript.)

¹⁹ The *Alphabetum Tibetanum* was compiled in 1762 by the Augustinian Antonio Agostino Giorgi (1711–1797). Giorgi himself had never been to Tibet, his book was based on the reports of 18th-century European missionaries: e.g. the analysis of the dogmatics of Buddhism from the Jesuit Ippolito Desideri, the dictionary of the Capuchin missionary, Francesco Orazio della Penna, or the engravings by another Capuchin, Cassiano da Macerata. On the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, see Tóth (1995).

On the basis of the outlines of a rich religious culture gained from *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, Csoma could set to research and put questions to the lamas. They answered with the help of the traditional literary genre of *dris-lan* ('answers to questions').²⁰

Kun-dga' Chos-legs's compendium covers several essential topics of Buddhism. It consists of four booklets and is divided into six numbered chapters in 174 folios altogether. Each chapter begins with a section title and ends in a part-colophon (except the last chapter, which is followed by a closing colophon): (1) The response to the questions relating to the formation, the existence, and the destruction of the world²¹ (ff. 47–85), (2) The response to the question relating to the essence of the Gems²² (ff. 85–102), (3) The response to the questions how the Śākya Master developed the mind set on supreme enlightenment, how he reached the enlightenment, and how he turned the wheel of Dharma²³ (ff. 102–140), (4) The response to the question how the sūtras and tantras spread in India and Tibet²⁴ (ff. 140–154), (5) The response to the question relating to the inner essence after reaching the stage of *dal-'byor*²⁵ (ff. 154–218), (6) The response to the question relating to the eight areas of the gradual liberation²⁶ (ff. 218–221).

Concerning Buddhist cosmology and its Tibetan terminology, Csoma had already known basic concepts from two sections of *Alphabetum Tibetanum*. In the chapter entitled *Explicatio Mundi Sincera* (Explication of the actual world) he could read about the various units of measuring the physical world, and the geographical location of its spheres. He could identify these places with the help of a large engraving and the respective descriptions (Giorgi 1762, pp. 470–486). He got acquainted with the living beings who inhabit these spheres in the chapter entitled *Cyclus Transmigrationum* (Cycle of transmigrations) with the help of a print of the wheel of life, and its description²⁷ (Giorgi 1762, pp. 487–499). In the whole work, the Tibetan terms are

²⁰ *Dris-lan* was very popular in the Tibetan literature at the time of Csoma. The antecedent of this genre was the tradition of *letter* (Skt. *lekha*) that flourished in the 10th–12th centuries in India. These letters were translated into Tibetan; and Tibetan writers soon began to compose similar answers to questions in their own language. These letters are about the moral teachings of Buddhism and some specific issues. Some famous letters were copied and spread in the whole country. Many of them have been preserved in monastic libraries and have become part of the omnibus edition of the authors (Tib. *gsung-'bum*) in the volume of the short works (Tib. *thor-bu*). Later other authors commented on these letters, thus creating a new tradition (see Dietz 1984).

²¹ Tib. 'jig-rten chags-tshul | bar-du gnas-tshul | mtha'-mar 'jig-tshul dris-pa'i lan |

²² Tib. Dkon-mchog-gi mtshan-nyid dris-pa'i lan |

²³ Tib. ston-pa Śākya thub-pas dang-por thugs-bskyed-pa-nas mthar sangs-rgyas-nas chos-kyi 'khor-lo bskor-tshul dris-pa'i lan |

²⁴ Tib. Rgya-Bod-du mdo-sngags ji-ltar dar-tshul dris-pa'i lan |

²⁵ Tib. dal-'byor-nas rtsams nang-don-la dris-pa'i lan |

²⁶ Tib. so-thar ris brgyad-kyi sdom grangs rtsi-tshul dris-pa'i lan |

²⁷ The wheel of life condenses the essential teachings of the Buddha into one picture: the images in the hub of the wheel represent the three poisons of ignorance, attachment and aversion. The second layer represents karma: one half-circle (usually light) shows contented people moving upwards to higher states and the other half-circle (usually dark) shows people in a miserable state being led downwards to lower states. The third layer of the wheel is divided into six sections that represent the six realms of states of existence. These six realms are divided into three higher realms and three lower realms. The outer rim of the wheel is divided into twelve sections that represent the

given in Tibetan, in Tibetan script, with their pronunciations added in accordance with Italian orthography. In several places the original Sanskrit words in Devanāgarī script are provided, too. These terms are mostly correct, and it was a good base for Csoma to understand more easily the system expounded by the lamas.

In addition to the information gained from the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, Csoma mentions in one of his reports written for the British authorities that his teacher, Sangs-rgyas Phun-tshogs made lists of the most important terms in various topics, which could serve as outlines for him. One of the themes covered was cosmography:

“After these follows a full register of all the gods, goddesses, and their families, heroes, good and bad spirits in the upper and lower regions, with names of their habitations, of their offices, &c. (...) For the Rirap (Sumeru, Olympus) and the whole system of the ancient mythology there are hundreds of names ...”²⁸

While answering Csoma’s questions, Kun-dga’ Chos-legs took into consideration that Csoma had no systematic knowledge about the topic, so he made his description of the structure of the world as simple as possible. He did not engage in a profound expounding even though he belonged to the ’Brug-pa bka’-brgyud-pa sect that followed the tantric tradition.

However, Csoma himself did not become absorbed in the theme of cosmology. The first who wrote about Kun-dga’ Chos-legs’s work was A. H. Francke. He published the outline of the contents in two brief papers in *Ungarische Jahrbücher* Nos VI and VIII (Francke 1926, 1928). A few years later, all the Alexander Books were surveyed by Louis Ligeti in an article published in *T’oung Pao* (Ligeti 1933). József Terjék, the former curator of the Tibetan manuscripts in the Oriental Collection of the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences gathered together all documents related to Csoma in the collections of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Terjék 1976a; 1976b), and also published a facsimile edition of the Alexander Books (Terjék 1976c).

3. Sources of the Two Compendiums

In Tibetan works it is common that the authors quote and insert parts from respected books, usually denoting the sources. The summary of ’Phags-pa lama differs from this tradition because in the main text there are no sources indicated, but there are two in the colophon for further reading. Kun-dga’ Chos-legs in his answer to Csoma’s

twelve links of dependent origination. The wheel is being held by a fearsome figure who represents impermanence. This figure is often depicted as the Lord of Death. Outside of the wheel the Buddha points toward the moon that represents the possibility of liberation from the six realms (see Khan-tipalo 1970).

²⁸ A detail from a report which was written by Csoma to captain C. P. Kennedy on 5th March 1825 (Duka 1885, p. 44).

questions suggests three works, two of which are identical with the ones in the colophon of 'Phags-pa lama's summary.

Two of these sources are enrolled in the Tibetan Canon, one of them can be found in the collection of the *Translated Words of the Buddha* (Tib. *Bka'-'gyur*): *The Supreme Dharma of the Application of Mindfulness* (Skt. *Saddharma-smṛtyu-pasthāna*, Tib. *Dam-pa'i chos dran-pa nye-bar gzhaḡ-pa*).²⁹ The other is classed among the *Translated Treatises* (Tib. *Bstan-'gyur*): Vasubandhu: *Treasury of Abhidharma* (Skt. *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, Tib. *Chos mngon-pa'i mdzod-kyi bshad pa*).³⁰ The third work, an original Tibetan treatise mentioned only by Kun-dga' Chos-legs, is a summary by Sgam-po-pa, a master of the Bka'-brgyud-patradition: *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (Tib. *Dam-chos yid-bzhin-gyi nor-bu thar-pa rin-po-che'i rgyan*).³¹

3.1. The Supreme Dharma of the Application of Mindfulness

This work, suggested for further study by both authors, contains 3400 pages and is part of the section Mdo-sde of the *Bka'-'gyur*. This text is one of the so-called *transmigration sūtras* – i.e. sūtras about rebirth in a lower or a higher realm depending on one's actions (Skilton 1994, p. 92) – which are Mahāyāna sūtras continuously created from the 1st century BC to the 10th century AD. The most detailed description about this extensive work was prepared by Csoma (1984b, 1984c, 1984d) who in one of his pioneering studies revealing the contents of the *Bka'-'gyur* and *Bstan-'gyur* writes the following:

“Sans. *Sad-dharmāsmṛityupasthānam*. Tib. *Dam-pahi-ch'os-dran-pa-nyé-var-bzhag-pa*, (from leaf 118–455, or the end of this volume, as also the next following three volumes.) True moral, or the recollection of one's self (in all one's doings.) There are instructions on all sorts of moral duties, delivered by SHĀKYA at place called *Naluti*, near *Rājagriha* (in *Magadha*). On the ten immoral actions, and the ten virtues the reverse of the former. The fruits or consequences of good and bad actions. Place of transmigrations. Rewards and punishments.

(HA) OR THE TWENTY-THIRD VOLUME.

Contents – Continuation of stories on the fruits or consequences of good and bad actions. Description of the places of good and bad transmigrations.

²⁹ Peking edition, No. 953; Derge edition, No. 287, *Bka'-'gyur* Mdo-sde, vol. za ff. 171r–516v, vol. 'a ff. 1r–478v, vol. ya ff. 1r–521v, vol. ra ff. 1r–355v.

³⁰ Derge edition, No. 4090; Peking edition, No. 5591, *Bstan-'gyur* Mngon-pa vol. i–vol. thu.

³¹ Sichuan Nationality Publisher, 1989. For the English translation of the book see Gampopa (1986 and 1998).

(YA) OR THE TWENTY-FOURTH VOLUME.

Contents – Continuation of stories on similar subjects with those in the two former volumes. The gods of the *Hthab-bral* (Sans. *Yāmā*) heaven – their actions, and the fruits of their works. Description of the pleasures enjoyed there by the gods. Through what virtuous works may one be born there, in his future transmigration. Exhortation to good works (in verse.) Praise of charity, morality, chastity, &c. Good and bad works. The ten immoral actions. Paradise and hell. Descriptions of them. The moral of several stories. Several stories or moral tales, told of good and bad actions. Lust, passion, ignorance, the source of misery, verses hortative to virtue, description of vice.

(RA) OR THE TWENTY-FIFTH VOLUME.

Contents – Continuation of stories like those in the three former volumes, to the *leaf* 348. And here ends the work that had been commenced on the 118th *leaf* of the ZA volume.” (Csoma 1984c, pp. 343–344.)

3.2. *Treasury of Abhidharma*

Both compendiums quote from this text which gives the most widespread and most often depicted cosmological system. It is considered to be a Theravāda work that was written in Sanskrit in the 4th century AD. The author is a Vaibhāṣika monk, Vasubandhu who summarised the knowledge about phenomena in poems. Later in his comments he criticised the theory of the Vaibhāṣika school from the point of view of the Sautrāntika tradition. The various mahāyāna schools of the following centuries taught the basic doctrines of Buddhism relying on this summary book. The Tibetan translation was made during the second spread of Buddhism in Tibet. When the Tibetan Canon was arranged, it was put into the section Mngon-pa of the *Bstan-'gyur*.

Csoma in his brief outline of the volumes of the *Bstan-'gyur* mentions this work:

“*Ch'hos-mñon-pa-mdsod*. (Sans. *Abhidharma*). Prospectus, or exhibition of remarkable things. There are many commentaries of this in several volumes.” (Csoma 1984d, p. 450.)

The work contains 600 poems and 8000 literal comments in 700 pages. Vasubandhu divided his work into eight chapters and an appendix.

Manifold discussion of the world is expounded in the third chapter, and its last part³² contains the description of the living beings and their habitats.³³

³² Derge edition, 4090, *Bstan-'gyur* Mngon-pa vol. ku, ff. 1r–258r, vol. khu, ff. 1r–95r.

³³ For the English translation of the section on cosmology, see Poussin (1990).

3.3. *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*

Sgam-po-pa Bsod-nams rin-chen (1074–1153)³⁴ was a Tibetan polyhistor and although he was reputed as one of the great fathers of the Bka'-brgyud-pa lineage, he actually got experienced in numerous other Tibetan traditions, too. *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* is one of his most significant works. It is an encyclopaedic book which is based on Atiśa's³⁵ *The Lamp of the Path of Enlightenment* (Tib. *Byang-chub lam-gyi sgron-ma*)³⁶ and is considered the masterwork of Tibetan Buddhism.

The twenty-one chapters in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* systematically lay out the path that must be travelled to reach Buddhahood. Along the way, this book explores topics such as finding a spiritual master, impermanence, the cultivation of mind of enlightenment, the development of the six perfections and other significant aspects of Buddhahood and its path. The chapter on the method contains a description of the suffering of living beings in the six realms. The aim of this description is to deter the practitioner away to bound the conditions of existence and to find a way out of suffering.

4. The Comparison of the Two Compendiums

The following summary table shows that the structure of the two texts is similar except for the little difference in the division of living beings. Moreover, the summary of Kun-dga' Chos-legs is much more schematic because of its smaller expanse.

'Phags-pa lama:

Explanation of the Knowable
(SHES)

Kun-dga' Chos legs:

Answers to the Questions of Sken-dha
from Europe (RGYA)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1.1 The constituents of the physical world
(ff. 2v–3r) | 1.1 The constituents of the physical
world (ff. 48–49) |
| 1.2. The origin of the universe (f. 3r–3v) | 1.2. The origin of the universe
(ff. 49–50) |

³⁴ His other names are Dwags-po Lha-rje, Zla-'od Gzhon-nu.

³⁵ Atiśa (980–1054), an Indian teacher, was the most important person of the later spread of Buddhism in Tibet. He helped the revival of the Tibetan Buddhist community and wrote many Buddhist treatises. His followers established the *Bka'-gdams-pa* sect, the first sect in Tibet.

³⁶ When Atiśa came from India to Tibet, he was asked by king Byang-chub 'Od (984–1078) to give Tibetans a complete and easily accessible summary of the doctrine. His teachings came to be known as the *stages of the path* (Tib. *lam-rim*) which present the stages in the complete path to enlightenment as taught by the Buddha. In his *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* he categorises the Buddhist practitioners into beings of three scopes, based upon the motivation of their religious activity (persons of modest scope, persons of medium scope and persons of high scope). The *lam-rim* expounds the possible ways of the development for each of the three groups.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1.3. <i>The origin</i> of the mountain ranges
(ff. 3v–4r) | 1.3. <i>The names</i> of the mountain ranges
(f. 50) |
| 1.4. <i>The origin and characteristics</i> of the
lakes, rivers and oceans (f. 4r) | 1.4. <i>The names</i> of the lakes, rivers and
oceans (f. 50) |
| 1.5. The names of the four continents
(f. 4r) | 1.5. The names of the four continents
and <i>their subcontinents</i> (ff. 50–51) |
| 1.5.1. The Jambu island and <i>its subconti-</i>
<i>nents</i> (ff. 4r–5v) | 1.5.1. The Jambu island (ff. 51–52) |
| 1.5.2. The island of the Majestic Body and
its subcontinents (f. 5v) | (not discussed) |
| 1.5.3. The island of the Unpleasant Sound
and its subcontinents (ff. 5v–6r) | (not discussed) |
| 1.5.4. The island of the Bountiful Cow and
its subcontinents (f. 6r) | (not discussed) |
| 1.5.5. The small islands (f. 6r) | 1.5.2. The small islands (f. 52) |
| 1.6. The Sun, the Moon and the stars
(ff. 6r–7r) | 1.6. The Sun, the Moon and the stars
(ff. 52–53) |
| 1.7. The dwelling-places of the Meru
mountain (ff. 7r–8r) | 1.7. The dwelling-places of the Meru
mountain (ff. 53–54) |
| 1.8. The system of the universes (f. 8r–
8v) | 1.8. The system of the universes
(ff. 54–56) |
| 2.1. <i>The division</i> of living beings (f. 9r) | 2.1. <i>The origin</i> of living beings
(ff. 56–60) |
| (discussed in 2.4.) | 2.2. The realm of animals (ff. 60–61) |
| (discussed in 2.3.) | 2.3. The realm of hungry ghosts
(ff. 61–63) |
| 2.2. The realm of the hells (f. 9r) | 2.4. The realm of the hells (f. 63) |
| 2.2.1. The hot hells (ff. 9r–10r) | 2.4.1. The hot hells (ff. 63–64) |
| 2.2.2. The adjacent hells (f. 10r–10v) | 2.4.2. The adjacent hells (ff. 64–66) |
| 2.2.3. The cold hells (ff. 10v–11r) | 2.4.3. The cold hells (ff. 66–67) |
| 2.2.4. The transition hells (f. 11r) | 2.4.4. The transition hells (f. 67) |
| 2.3. The realm of hungry ghosts
(f. 11r–11v) | (discussed in 2.3.) |
| 2.4. The realm of animals (f. 11v) | (discussed in 2.2.) |

2.5. The realm of human beings (ff. 11v–12r)	(not discussed)
2.6. The realm of demigods (ff. 12r–13v)	2.5. The realm of demigods (ff. 67–68)
2.7. The realm of gods (f. 13v)	2.6. The realm of gods (f. 68)
2.7.1. The gods of the realms of desires (ff. 13v–15r)	2.6.1. The gods of the realms of desires (ff. 68–74)
2.7.2. The gods of the realm of forms (ff. 15r–16r)	2.6.2. The gods of the realm of forms (ff. 74–77)
2.7.3. The gods of the formless realm (f. 16r–16v)	2.6.3. The gods of the formless realm (ff. 77–79)
3. The six aeons (f. 16v)	3. The six aeons (f. 79)
3.1. The intermediate aeon (f. 16v)	3.1. The intermediate aeon (ff. 79–80)
3.2. The aeon of formation – <i>The origin of living beings</i> (ff. 16v–17v)	3.2. The aeon of formation (f. 80)
3.2.1. The genealogy of the kings of India (ff. 17v–18v)	(not discussed)
3.2.2. The genealogy of the kings of Tibet (ff. 18v–19v)	(not discussed)
3.2.3. The genealogy of the kings of Mongolia (ff. 19v–20r)	(not discussed)
3.3. The aeon of abiding (f. 20r–20v)	3.3. The aeon of abiding (ff. 80–82)
3.4. The aeon of destruction (ff. 20v–21r)	3.4. The aeon of destruction (ff. 83–85)
3.5. The aeon of voidness (f. 21r)	3.5. The aeon of voidness (ff. 82–83)
3.6. The great aeon (f. 21r–21v)	3.6. The great aeon (f. 83)

Comparing the two texts, the following conclusions can be made:

(a) Thirteen chapters of both works (comprising approximately the half of their full size) are almost the same word by word: the description of the constituents of the physical world (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.1), the system of the universes (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.8), the realm of hungry ghosts (SHES, RGYA Chapter 2.3), the realm of animals (SHES Chapter 2.4, RGYA Chapter 2.2), the realm of desires, the realm of forms and the formless realm with their respective gods (SHES Chapter 2.7, RGYA Chapter 2.6), the intermediate aeon (SHES, RGYA Chapter 3.1), the origin of living beings (SHES Chapter 3.2, RGYA Chapter 2.1), the aeons of abiding, of destruction, of voidness and the great aeon (SHES, RGYA Chapters 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6).

(b) In four chapters Kun-dga' Chos-legs merely lists the names, while 'Phags-pa gives detailed explanations: the mountain ranges (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.3), the

lakes, rivers and oceans (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.4), the four continents and their sub-continents (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.5), and the realm of demigods (SHES Chapter 2.6, RGYA Chapter 2.5).

(c) 'Phags-pa's work contains five chapters (approximately a quarter of its full size) on topics which are not discussed in the text of Kun-dga' Chos-legs: the division of living beings (SHES Chapter 2.1), the description of the realm of human beings (SHES Chapter 2.5), and the genealogy of the kings of India, Tibet and Mongolia (SHES Chapters 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3).

(d) Concerning the four chapters on the realm of the hells, only the names of the hells are identical in the two treatises, the description of the hells (SHES Chapter 2.2, RGYA Chapter 2.4) is totally different.

(e) Three chapters constitute a special case. There are chapters where Kun-dga' Chos-legs selects some important information and rewrites them in one sentence. These chapters include the description of the Sun, the Moon and the stars (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.6), the origin of the universe (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.2) and the dwelling-places of the Meru mountain (SHES, RGYA Chapter 1.7). The presentation of this kind of rewriting can be read in the following example. In 'Phags-pa's Tibetan text, as well as in the English translation, the identical parts to that of the summary of Kun-dga' Chos-legs are marked with underline.

Explanation of the Knowable (f. 6r–6v):

'di-nas steng-du dpag-tshad bzhi-khri 'phags-pa'i nam-mkha'-la dangs-
shing sgrib-pa-med-la shin-tu brtan-pa'i rlung-gi dkyil-'khor g.yas
phyogs-su 'khor-ba-la nyi-ma dang | zla-ba dang | rgyu-skar-la sogs-pa
brten-zhing de-dag-la ni nam-mkha'-la rgyu-ba'i lha-rnams gnas-so |
de-la nyi-ma'i dkyil-'khor ni me-shel-las grub-pa | dkyil-gyi thad-kar
dpag-tshad lnga-bcu-rtsa-gcig dang | mtha'-skor-du dpag-tshad brgya-
lnga-bcu-rtsa-gsum-gyis 'khor-zhing | 'phan-du dpag-tshad drug-dang
bco-brgyad-kyi cha yod-la |
steng-du gser-gyi kha-khyer-gyis yongs-su bskor-zhing | gser dang |
dngul dang | baidurya dang | shel-las grub-pa'i lcog bzhi-dang ldan-pa |
lha'i (6v) bu nyi-ma 'khor-dang bcas-pa'i gzhal-yas-khang yin-no | de
rlung-gros-kyis bskyod-pas gling bzhi nyin-zhag gcig-la 'khor-bar
byed-de |
rang-'gros-kyis byang-du bgrod-pa'i tshe nyi-ma ring-la | de'i tshe
 dbyar 'byung-ngo | lhor bgrod-pa'i tshe nyi-ma thung-zhin | de'i tshe
 dgun-du 'gyur-ro | lho-byang-gi dkyil-nas bgrod-pa'i tshe nyin-mchan
 mnyam-pa nyid-do | de-ltar bgrod-pa'i 'od-zer-gyi dbang-gis | tsha-ba
 dang | grang-ba dang | dbyar-dgun-la sogs-pa'i dus-kyi nges-par 'gyur-
 ro | nyi-ma des zla-ba drug byang-du bgrod-pa dang | zla-ba drug lhor
 bgrod-pa'i mtshams-la nyi-ma ldog-'jug-gi dus-tshigs zhes brjod-cing |
 rgyu-skar-gyi dkyil-'khor lan cig 'khor-ba-la ni lo gcig ces brjod-do |

Translation:

Above [the Jambu island], on a shining, flawless and very stable ring of wind whirling to the right are placed the Sun, the Moon and the stars that are populated by the divinities running on the sky. The Sun is made of fire crystal, its diameter is 51 yojana, its circumference is 153 yojana and its thickness is 6/18 yojana.

On the top [of the Sun-disk] there is a Heavenly Palace with four towers, made of gold, silver, sapphire and crystal and surrounded by a golden-border. The towers are populated by the son of the God of Sun and his attendants. They are kept in continuous movement by the flow of the wind and the four continents complete one full circle in a day. During the movement of the Sun giving rise to north [magnetic] declination when daytime is longer. This is the season of summer. During the south [magnetic] declination the daytime is shorter. This is the season of winter. During the declination from the intersection of south and north the daytime and nighttime are equal. In this way the bending sunlight gives rise to hot and cold, to summer and winter and of course to the other seasons. The turning back at the end of the six-month north and six-month south declination of the Sun is called the beginning of a season. The time during which [the Sun] moves around the orbit of the constellations is called year.

Answers to the Questions of Sken-dha from Europe (ff. 52–53):

'di-nas steng-gi nam-mkha'-la dangs-shing sgrib-pa med-pa shin-tu
brtan-pa rlung-gi dkyil-'khor g.yas-phyogs 'khor-ba-la | nyi-ma dang |
zla-ba dang | rgyu-skar-la sogs-pa brten-cing | de-dag-la ni mkha'-la
rgyu-ba'i rgyal-chen bzhi ris-kyi lha-rnams gnas-so | de (53) rlung-gi
'gros-kyis bskyod-pa | gling-bzhi nyin-zhag gcig-la 'khor-bar byed-do |
nyi-ma'i rang-'gros-kyi dbyar-dgun-sogs dang | ...

Translation:

Above [the Jambu island], on a shining, flawless and very stable ring of wind whirling to the right are placed the Sun, the Moon and the stars that are populated by the divinities of the four races of the great kings running on the sky. (53) They are kept in continuous movement by the flow of the wind, and the four continents complete one full circle in a day. The movement of the Sun gives rise to summer, winter and to other seasons...

5. Conclusion

Comparing the two treatises it can be said that the compendium of Kun-dga' Chos-legs is by and large based on 'Phags-pa lama's work, however, Kun-dga' Chos-legs does not mention his name or the title of his work.

The similarity of the two compendiums can be traced back to the circumstances of creation. In Tibet the novices usually begin their studies of the Buddhist teachings around the age of seven. After fourteen years of study³⁷ and with a lot of learning behind them, the monks spend two years thoroughly studying *abhidharma* (Tib. *chos mngon*). In contrast with it, at the time of the writing of the compendiums Jingim was thirty-five and Csoma was forty-one years old and both of them had scarce knowledge about Buddhism. In the court of his father, Jingim could come in contact with Buddhism, but Csoma came up against much more difficulties because he grew up in European culture and he met with a widely different culture in Ladakh.

A common source could explain the similarity of the two works, but the structures and the contents of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* and *The Supreme Dharma of the Application of Mindfulness* are different from both works. Besides these, Kun-dga' Chos-legs suggests Sgam-po-pa's work, but he does not quote from it.

Another explanation might be that the two lamas belonged to two different sects, so Kun-dga' Chos-legs did not want to mention a Sa-skyapa master or an earlier Sa-skyapa work among his sources, despite the fact that he denoted *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* as a source, although Sgam-po-pa followed the Bka'-brgyud-pa sect.

The similarity of the two compendiums remains an open question and it calls for further research.

Abbreviations

RGYA	Kun-dga'-chos-legs: <i>Rgya-gar rum-yul-pa Sken-dhas dris-lan</i> .
SHES	'Phags-pa bla-ma: <i>Shes-bya rab-gsal</i> .
Skt.	Sanskrit
Tib.	Tibetan

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³⁷ Main subjects: 3 years of logic (Tib. *tshad-ma*), 5 years of perfection of transcendent wisdom (Tib. *sher-phyin*), 4 years of middle way (Tib. *dbu-ma*) and 2 years of discipline (Tib. *'dul-ba*). Lhundrup Sopa (1983, pp. 23–27).

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